



‘Now!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #47

‘We are Barabbas!’

Mark 15:1-20

Wednesday, April 16th, 2025

This Past Sunday in the NOW Sermon Series:

- This past Sunday we looked at Mark 14:53-72, with a sermon entitled ‘*The Weight of the World!*’.
 - I asked this question this past Sunday Morning *What happens to Jesus after He was arrested and what does it mean for our lives?*
 - **Truth #1: *Blood Thirsty Wolves.* (vv. 53-65)**
 - **Truth #2: *Brutal Truth Written.* (vv. 66-72)**
 - In the shoes that you are walking in, have you let the weight go?
 - Have you given the weight to Jesus? Because He cares for you.

‘We are Barabbas!’

Mark 15:1-20

Sermon in a Sentence:

You and I can see that we are Barabbas when we look at the Silence, Substitution, and Striking that is found in this text.

Intro:

- Oftentimes when I can’t be here or am away, Pastor Steve will take my place and fill in the gap.
 - *Like he did so wonderfully while I was away on sabbatical.*
 - If there’s a meeting or something where your attendance is expected, but for whatever reason you can’t make it, you may have someone take your place.
- *Having someone take your place takes on an entire different meaning when it involves life or death.*

Question to Ask:

How does the releasing of Barabbas symbolize our own salvation story through the substitutionary atonement of Jesus?

Truth #1: *The Silence.* (vv. 1-5)

- ‘And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.’ Mark 15:1

- What was an all night affair, turned into an early morning meeting with Pilate.
 - *Why the rush?*
 - The Religious leaders must move quickly, and get Jesus' case to Pilate because they want Jesus executed before the sabbath begins, which would have been on Friday evening at Sundown.
 - *This evening we move from the courtyard, where Peter denied Jesus, to the face to face encounter between Pilate and Jesus.*
 - Before looking at the conversation (really one sided) between Jesus and Pilate, we must understand who Pilate was.
- *Pilate's Profile. (v. 1)*
 - 'And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.'
 - The Sandhedrin (Jewish leaders) have already decided to convict Jesus of Blasphemy, but they were going to present it to pilate as 'King of the Jews' so that Pilate might view it as a challenge to Caesar.
 - *See how crafty and manipulative people can be when they desperately want to have their way?*
 - The Roman government would be the ones to have to do the killing, and this situation was put on Pilate's Plate.

- *Pilate was the 5th Roman governor of Judea after the reign of King Archelaous in A.D. 6. (See Matthew 2:22).*
 - Pilate held the position of governor from A.D. 26-36.
 - He was appointed to this position by the emperor of Rome at the time, Tiberius.
- *Josephus and Philo both required Pilate as being 'cruel and without any sensitivity for Jewish religious beliefs or practices.'*
 - Luke 13:1 tells us of an instance when Pilate messed with the Jews.
- The governors of the different sections of Rome lived in Caesarea.
 - *But it is believed that Pilate was in Jerusalem at this time to handle any public uproars that may come up with the thousands of sojourners who came for the passover feast.*
- Jewish protests were quite common, for Pilate, this is other time his job is to 'calm down' the jews.
- *Pilate's Predicament. (vv. 2-5)*
 - 'And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." **3** And the chief priests accused him of many things. **4** And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." **5** But Jesus

made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.’

- *Pilate has some very angry Jewish Chief Priests who of course want Jesus to be killed.*
 - *But Pilate’s Predicament is that he can’t see what Jesus has done wrong, to warrant death. Even more than this, he is astounded by the silence of Jesus.*
 - Jesus’ silence goes a long way with Pilate in this case.
- All four Gospel accounts of this scene (Matthew 27:11, Luke 23:3, John 18:33) word Pilate’s question the exact same way.
 - *Up until this point in Mark’s Gospel the term ‘King of the Jews’ has not appeared in Mark, but it will appear 3 times in our text tonight and 6 total in Mark 15.*
- *In verse 2, Pilate asks Jesus if He is the King of the Jews, and in doing so, like the High Priest in Mark 14:61, is an accurate, though ignorant, confessor of Jesus as the Christ.*
 - Jesus answers in a way that is neither an affirmation nor a denial.
- I think that Jesus may have been thinking at the time **Yes, I am a King, but not just any King, I am THE King and not the kind of King that you think I am.**

- Remember what Jesus said in John 18:36?

- ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’

- *In verse 3, Mark doesn’t tell us the specific charges that were made.*

- Luke 23:2 tells us what these specific things were:

- ‘And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.”

- *Most people who knew they were going to die, would not have stood there silently. They would be freaking out, scrambling, and trying to get out of the situation.*

- Many last words are given before someone is executed...

- *Nathan Hale for Example (Patriot Spy in the revolution) was hanged and stated, ‘My only regret is that I have only one life to give to my country.’*
- *Major John Andre (British Spy in the revolution) was hanged and stated ‘I’ll face my fate like a brave man’.*

- ***But Pilate is shocked, Jesus isn't scrambling. Why? Jesus is in control and knows that this is part of fulfilling His role in the Plan that God had laid out.***

- In verses 4 & 5, Jesus says nothing. (Jesus fulfills Isaiah 53:7 by not saying anything).
 - No defense, not a word, not a peep, simply because Jesus had talked to His Father the night before, and knew this is how it had to be.
- Luke 23:6-12 tells us that Pilate washed his hands and sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, but Jesus would not even say a word to him. The evil man who killed his cousin, John the Baptist.
 - *How much better would we all be if we just shut our mouths more and didn't feel like we constantly have to fight for ourselves to get our way and be understood?*
- Like Pilate, I am amazed by the silence of Jesus here.

Truth #2: *The Substitution.* (vv. 6-15)

- The crowd was loud, large, and boisterous at this point.
 - *The Chief Priests had achieved their goal of getting a large amount of people to be against Jesus. And for now, it certainly worked.*
 - But, Pilate realizes he's in a bad spot.

- *In John 18:38, Pilate tells the Jewish leaders that 'I find no grounds for charging Him'.*

- ***On top of this, Pilate's have had a dream about this and told her husband not to have anything to do with Jesus in Matthew 27:19.***

- Pilate even knows according to verse 10 of our text, that the Chief priests were only doing this out of envy.
- In this text I see that Pilate had an opportunity to do the right thing (there is always an opportunity to do what's right), but as we will see, he gave into the pressure of the crowd.
 - *We need more Christians today who have real backbones. We need Christians who not only know what's right, but stand for what is right.*
- Pilate is looking for...
- ***A Way Out.* (vv. 6-10)**
 - 'Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. 7 And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. 8 And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for

them. **9** And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” **10** For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.’

- *Apparently Pilate had created a habit/tradition through the years that during the Passover he would release a Jewish prisoner to improve morale and cut down on riots.*

- Pilate is going to try to use this as a way out, and try to get Jesus out of this.
- *But, this was all apart of God’s plan and His Will, and when something is God’s plan, it’s going to happen. No matter what we try to do to stop it.*
 - God’s sovereignty is all over this situation.

- *Mark tells us about this man Barabbas, whose name in the greek means son of the father.*

- Barabbas would have been a local hero to the Jews. During an insurrection against the Roman government, Barabbas, a jew, had killed someone during the insurrection. He was a convicted murderer.

- *He was in prison at the time awaiting his coming execution.*

- Scholar David Garland wrote *‘Barabbas may have been a right-wing extremist fighting to*

deliver Israel from the pollution of Roman rule, or he may have been simply been a bandit.’

- Either way, the crowd shouted Barabbas, a murderer to go back to the streets and for Jesus to take his place.

- *In verse 9, Pilate asks them if they want to release the King of the Jews,*

- Pilate’s plan definitely backfired. But God’s plan is proceeding as He intended it to.

- Even when you don’t understand why God isn’t doing things your way, please remember that things are going according to His plan for a purpose and a reason.

- Pilate knows why the Chief priests are doing this, but he chooses not to do the right thing.

- *Are you a person that has a backbone? Or do you cave into people pleasing? We’ve got tons of Pilates walking around...*

- *Out of Hand. (vv. 11-15)*

- ‘But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. **12** And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” **13** And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” **14** And Pilate said to them, “Why? What

evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” **15** So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged^[a] Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.’

- *The chief priests caught onto the fact that Pilate may try to do something to have Jesus released.*
 - So they pump up the crowd and get everyone angry and loud.
 - These are the blood thirsty wolves in their element. Ganging up on someone who is obviously down.
- *In verse 11 the crowd insists that Barabbas be given to them and released free.*
 - Remember, you and I are Barabbas. It is you and I that should have had to die on the cross.
- *In verse 12, Pilate then asks, ‘Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?’*
 - It wasn’t Pilate’s idea to have Jesus crucified. Crucifixion was the highest and most brutal form of punishment in the Roman government.
 - *Murderers and bandits were crucified. Not a man who was claiming to be the King.*

- This is where the situation escalates greatly and gets out of hand.

■ *When situations escalate and get out of hand in your life, be a de-escalator not gas on a fire.*

- Situations, like this one here in our text, can get out of hand rather quickly.
- Pilate asks why in verse 14, but the crowd keeps getting louder. In order to please the people, Pilate gives him, and releases Barrabas, and gives them Jesus.
 - *How much wrongdoing will you commit just to satisfy others and make them happy?*
 - Sadly, look at where we’ve gotten as a Church? (BIG C CHURCH)
 - Look where we’ve come as a society all because good men and women in leadership positions decide to cave in.
- *Pilate has had enough, and washes his hands. Jesus was innocent, but declared guilty.*
 - Without knowing it, the religious leaders, pilate and Barabbas were all apart of God’s plan to save us as sinners.

Truth #3: *The Striking.* (vv. 16-20)

- ‘And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters),^[b] and they called together the whole battalion.^[c] **17** And they clothed him

in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. **18** And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” **19** And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. **20** And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.’

- In verse 15, we are told that Jesus is scourged, and some translations say flogged.
 - *A roman scouring was awful.*
 - *A person would be bound to a post or pillar and be beaten until his flesh was hanging from the bone in bloody shreds.*
 - A Flagellum was a tool that consisted of leather thongs that were plaited with several pieces or bone or lead and it formed a chain.
 - Josephus recorded that some were flogged to the point that you could see their organs.
- *Alone, humiliated, naked, and beaten close to death, Jesus was endured it to save us.*
 - These verses describe the details of what happened here...
 - #1: Jesus was clothed in a purple cloak, possibly a faded military garment.
 - #2: A mock crown, one of thorns was pressed onto his head.
 - #3: Mocking Him by saying ‘Hail, King of the Jews’

- #4: Hit him with a stick
- #5: Spitting and insulting Him.
- #6: They knelt down in mock worship of Him.
- #7: Then, they led Him out.

Conclusion:

- **Illustration**

- While the civil war was going on, there was a group of organized outlaws located in the Midwest that were called Qualntrell’s Raiders.
- They were notorious for sweeping down on small towns on the western frontier and robbing, pillaging and burning towns and killing people.
- *In Kansas, a group of settlers had enough of the groups violence, and decided to assemble a militia to search and find these desperados.*
 - The orders given to the volunteer soldiers were to kill them once they were found.
- *Not too long after the group set out, they captured some of these outlaws in Iowa.*
 - They dug a long trench, tied the hands and legs of all the men, and blindfolded them.
 - The guns of the soldiers were all lined up and they were seconds away from receiving the orders to shoot.
- *At the last minute, a man rushed out of a nearby bush, and cried out ‘Wait Wait!’*

- Major Whittle, the officer in command, heard the man out, as Willie Lee said, *'Let that man go free. He has a wife, and babies, and is needed at thome. Let me take his place.'*
 - Though Willie Lee had done no wrong, he took a guilty plea, and would not be denied.
 - Major Whittle decided to let the man go free, and the innocent man hopped in line, and seconds later, was shot to death.
 - *The redeemed man was able to go free.*
 - Years later, this redeemed man came back to the awful scene where the mass execution occurred, and uncovered the grave, and took his friend's body out.
 - He put the body on a mule and took it back to Kansas, and gave him a proper burial.
 - *To this day, the marble monument is inscribed with these words:*
 - *'Sacred to the memory of Willie Lee. He took my place in the line He died for me.'*
 - This evening we arrive to a scripture text that explains how a convicted murder, Barabbas was set free because Jesus took his place.
- *Due to our sin, we all were supposed to die and spend eternity in hell.*
- But Jesus took our place. He took our sin and shame, and died on the Cross so that we might have life in Him.
 - *So tonight, it is my prayer that we will realize that we are Barrabbas.*
 - It is us who should have had to die on the cross, but Jesus took our place. He paid a debt we could not pay.
 - It's Holy Week, and from the High Priest's court hearings to Pilate's proceedings, the time has come...